

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Jewel Mullen, M.D., M.P.H., M.P.A.
Commissioner



Dannel P. Malloy
Governor
Nancy Wyman
Lt. Governor

HEALTH EQUITY POLICY STATEMENT

BACKGROUND

The mission of the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) is "to protect and improve the health and safety of the people of Connecticut by: assuring the conditions in which people can be healthy; promoting physical and mental health; and preventing disease, injury, and disability." Implicit in this mission is the underlying principle of health equity. The Connecticut General Assembly has found that "equal enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is a human right and a priority of the state."¹

As the lead agency in protection of the public's health, DPH achieves its mission through facilitating partnerships and coalition building around public health priorities, licensing, regulation, enforcement procedures, and surveillance and monitoring of disease and related risk factors in the entire population and among population subgroups. DPH carries out its mission through partnerships in a manner that promotes optimum health and healthy years of life for all 3.5 million Connecticut residents. Fundamental to the fair administration of its programs and services is DPH's effort to address the challenges faced by certain vulnerable populations, to ensure equitable access to resources and services, and to do no harm. As such, a substantial percentage of DPH resources and efforts directly support vulnerable populations, that is, those who may be at risk for poor physical and mental health and social well-being.

Historically, DPH has worked collaboratively across state agencies to carry out its mission. Key partners include the following executive Departments: Mental Health & Addiction Services, Social Services, Energy and Environmental Protection, Labor, Education, Children and Families, Emergency Management and Homeland Security, Developmental Services, Veterans Affairs, and the state university system, including the University of Connecticut.

HEALTH DISPARITIES AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS SERVED

The Connecticut Department of Public Health has defined *health disparities* and *at risk or vulnerable populations* in our state as:

... differences in disease risk, incidence, prevalence, morbidity, and mortality and other adverse conditions, such as unequal access to quality health care, that exists among specific population groups in Connecticut. Population groups may be based on race, ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic position, immigrant status, sexual minority status, language, disability, homelessness, mental illness, and geographic area of residence. Specifically, health disparities refer to those avoidable differences in health that result from cumulative social disadvantages.²

¹Connecticut General Statutes § 38a-1051 (2008) Available at: http://search.cga.state.ct.us/dtsearch_pub_statutes.html

²Adapted from Stratton A, Hynes MM, and Nepaul A (2007) *Defining Health Disparities*. Hartford, CT: Connecticut Department of Public Health. Available at: www.ct.gov/dph/cthealthdisparitiesproject



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POLICY

It is the policy of the Connecticut Department of Public Health to conduct the following ten essential services³ for all Connecticut residents, with special attention to the needs of vulnerable population groups:

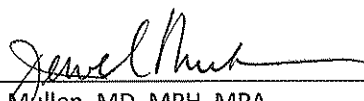
- Monitor health status to identify and address community health problems and health disparities.
- Identify and investigate health problems and health hazards in communities with emphasis on environmental equity.
- Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues with special attention to the health literacy needs of vulnerable population groups.
- Engage and convene broadly diverse groups of statewide and community-level partners to identify and solve health problems.
- Support individual and community health efforts through culturally appropriate plans and policies.
- Enforce laws and regulations that protect health and ensure safety in a non-discriminatory manner, in accordance with the *Non-Discrimination in the Provision of the Department of Public Health Programs and Services Policy*.
- Link people to needed personal health services in a culturally and linguistically accessible manner, and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable.
- Assure a competent public and personal health care workforce with training, learning, and development practices that continually evolve with the health and cultural needs of populations served.
- Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services, with special attention to broadening programs and resources for populations facing social or economic barriers.
- Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems and emerging health concerns, including health disparities among vulnerable population groups.

Moreover, recognizing that health disparities cannot be addressed unless they are accurately described by timely and appropriate data on the social determinants of health and indicators of social disadvantage, DPH will continue to implement and monitor the progress of its data systems toward achieving compliance with the *DPH Policy on the Collection of Sociodemographic Data*.

POLICY PROCESS

This policy applies to all staff and programs of the Connecticut Department of Public Health. It will be periodically reviewed and updated as appropriate to be consistent with the agency mission and strategic planning efforts.

It is the policy of DPH to fully comply with state and federal law non-discrimination requirements, and its *Non-Discrimination in the Provision of the Department of Public Health Programs and Services Policy* specifies these statutory prohibitions. All questions and concerns regarding this policy and its application should be directed to: DPH Equal Employment Opportunity Manager, Amanda Anduaga-Roberson, at 410 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT, 06134; phone: 860-509-7267.


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Commissioner

5/11/2012
Date

³ Adapted from Public Health Functions Steering Committee, Members (July, 1995) *Ten Essential Services of Public Health*
Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/nphsp/essentialServices.html>